



THE TOASTMASTER: Gentlemen, I regret to state that Justice Victor J. Dowling of this city has wired us that he is too ill to be with us, and expressed his great regret that he cannot be. I am very sorry of this fact, for the reason that I think we are here to express our loyalty to our adopted home, and in the character of Judge Dowling we have a native-born New Yorker, that rare kind of a gentleman who was born and brought up upon this hospitable isle, and who, in his brilliant career as a legislator and as a justice of the Supreme Court, has reflected upon himself the greatest amount of credit. I am sure you will all regret with me that Judge Dowling is not able to be with us.

Gentlemen, more than twenty years ago your society was, at its fourth annual banquet honored by the presence of an ex-president of the United States, but this evening for the first time a President-elect of the United States, who is the tenth President the South has furnished to the nation, is our guest of honor.

Our very distinguished guest of honor is a notable example of the right man in the right place, always and everywhere, and it is a source of special pleasure to be able to say that he has honored this society on more than one occasion with his presence, and has always favored us with masterful addresses which we have greatly enjoyed. He needs no introduction and I have

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the greatest honor in presenting to you Governor Woodrow Wilson, President-elect of the United States.

GOVERNOR WOODROW WILSON (President-elect of the United States): Mr. Toastmaster, ladies and gentlemen, I can say to you, without the slightest affectation, that I arise feeling a very great embarrassment, because when a man is made to think about himself that is the profoundest cause for embarrassment.

When you voted for me, if you did, you were thinking about what you wished to see accomplished; but tonight you are looking upon the work of your hands, and I say to you, in order to divert your thoughts and perhaps your attention, that I am not thinking of what I wish to be; I am thinking of what I wish to do. And unless you think the same way, just that much strength will be subtracted from the government of the United States, for the important thing, in the present day and at this particular moment, is what you think.

A nation is not made of anything physical. A nation is made of its thoughts and its purposes. Nothing can give it dignity except its thoughts. Nothing can give it impulse except its ideals. You will be laid away in some grave to sleep, with or without expectation of resurrection, but you will leave behind you a living nation, and you will have contributed to it nothing permanent except the thoughts which you spoke to your neighbors,

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which you spoke in private to those to whom you unbared your real soul.

And so it seems to me that what we ought to think about tonight is not that the Democratic party has won a victory, is not that a particular combination of men have put into office those whom they regard as their representatives in a political contest, but that there is a vast deal to do in the United States, and that it can be done best by forgetting that we are partisans of anything except the honor and prosperity and integrity of the nation itself.

We cannot be jealous of the nation's honor unless we are jealous of our own, and we cannot understand what constitutes the honor of a nation unless we understand what constitutes the honor of a man. The honor of a man does not consist in consistently serving himself, but in spending some of the fine energy in him on something that has nothing to do with his own personal fortunes. You are patriotic in proportion as you prefer the nation to yourself, and in proportion as there are large numbers of men, or small, who entertain that preference, and entertain it with a passionate sincerity, in that proportion is the nation strong and great, weak or contemptible, in that proportion is hope magnified or chilled for years to come.

What has interested me, therefore, in recent years, has been the change in the thought of the men who have been in a position to do the large things in this country.

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The thought of some of them has not changed as fast as I should like to see it, but the thought of most of them has changed. It has been my function in the past, perhaps because of a naturally combative nature, to stand often in this room and say to the audiences before me what I knew beforehand they would not like to hear, and to say to them what I believed they would not agree with me in thinking. I have been very disagreeable in this room, not of set purpose, but because I believed at the time that I was speaking what the men before me would ultimately think; and I have seen, not because of any leadership of mine, but because of the steady movement of the moral tides in this country, I have seen the time come when men will cheer sentiments which were once received in chilly silence. I have seen the time come when the business men of New York knew that in the past they had been conducting the business of this country in the wrong way because in the wrong spirit; because in that spirit which makes it impossible for any man to be useful, the notion that he is the appointed trustee to do the thinking for the rest of mankind, and that prosperity consists in the building up of wealth according to his plans and in conforming with his purposes.

The great difficulty with New York has often been that it thought that all the thinking was done in New York, and in that spirit you can neither have sympathy nor respect for the rest of the United States. That sort

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of intolerance which is natural on the part of men bent with all their energies upon a particular task no longer characterizes an audience like this as it used to characterize it, because, whether by one sort of influence or another, we have been made conscious of the great powers that lie dispersed throughout America. I used to be a hopeless provincial and I always would have remained a hopeless provincial if I had always stayed in one place. The only way you can get other atmospheres into your head is to move into other atmospheres. The only way you can believe that other men know as much as you do is by finding that they know more than you do. The only way to find the variety of the truth is to come into contact with the variety of mind that contains the variety of truth. And so an audience like this has this significance. You have imported the thought of another part of the country into this great port into which so many things are imported. You have imported the thought of the South into New York.

I am happy to concur with one of the distinguished gentlemen who preceded me, in the thought that there is no longer any serious consciousness in this country of sectional differences, but that that consciousness has disappeared not merely by the healing processes of time; for if the circumstances of America had remained the same, time would not have accomplished the thing which we now see brought about. The world has changed about us. America is not what it was when the Civil

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War was fought. We have come into a new age. There can be no sectionalism about the thinking of America from this time on, because no hard-headed man can prove to you that there are any separate, sectional interests anywhere. The nation in our day and all nations in our day have been so interlaced, they have been so mixed not only by mixture of population but by the union of interests that sectionalism is impossible. But there is something that is different in the make-up of a company like this from the makeup of an ordinary company ordinarily assembled in this hall.

What have you brought out of the South? You may have lost some of it; you may have loved the South without desiring to live in it. You may do what I have seen so many New England Societies do: Worship the Puritans at a very respectful distance. You may believe that the South was a good place to come *from*. You may have a reverence for times which you thank God have gone by; but, having lost all this and being perfectly content to live in New York, what have you brought that you have not thrown away?

The South is an idea with most Southerners, and I have sometimes asked myself, as a Southerner, What is the idea? I find that some people think that America was settled at the time the Puritans came over, but it was settled several years before that in a colony known as Virginia. And when the American Revolution came on, Virginia showed this singular characteristic: She

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was willing to fight for something that had nothing to do with her own material interests. The Navigation laws, the restrictions of trade cut very deep at the port of Boston, but they did not cut deep on the James River. There was nothing that seriously interfered with the material prosperity of Virginia in the cause that was made the cause of the Revolution, and the only greatness of Washington and the other men who stood with him there was that they thought in terms that were not the terms of their own lives and interests; and unless the South can continue to do that, she will cease to have any claim to distinction whatever.

Having come out of the South, are you willing to fight for other people's causes, or are you not? I would not be understood as detracting in the least degree from those equally great men who sternly set their faces to right the wrongs that touched their own people in New England. I dare say that if the circumstances had been reversed they would have joined their brethren in Virginia to defend the rights of the people of Virginia, but I am saying that the South has again and again fought against her own material interests for something which she believed to be a common cause.

There were thinking men in the South who knew it was against the material interests of the South to fight for slavery. Slavery is not for the material interest of any nation. They were fighting because of a certain stubborn pride, that said: "We must insist upon choos-

ing our own way of life." That is all they were fighting for. They were fighting to put themselves at a permanent disadvantage in the economic development of the United States.

Now that may be a good idea or it may be a bad idea, but it is an idea. It is not a thing. And men who have lost the capacity to feel a passion so great for an idea that they are ready to lay down their lives for it, have ceased to be of the kind of stuff that unconquerable people are made of.

Mr. Thomas quoted a remark of mine that the man knew the strength of the stream who was swimming against it. I have been swimming against it all day in New Jersey, and therefore I have come here in a somewhat grim and solemn humor. Yes, we straightened things out in New Jersey, but they are not going to stay straightened out of themselves, and the happiest circumstance in the minds of some gentlemen in New Jersey to-night is that they can now count the day when they can get rid of me. That is the reason I informed them to-day that they were not going to get rid of me.

A man can live in Washington and know what is going on in New Jersey, and a man can say from Washington what he thinks about what is going on in New Jersey, and he can say it in the only way which is effectual by mentioning the names of the gentlemen concerned. This anonymous authorship of iniquity ought to stop; the authors ought to be obliged to sign their products.



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It is all very well to insist it shall be made publicly known who owns this, that, or the other journal, but it should be made publicly known as well who owns this, that, or the other idea or purpose, and if it cannot be produced by law, it can be produced by conversation and by speechmaking, and by doing the only thing which, so far as I know, has ever rendered me effective, talking in specifications.

They are the only things I am interested in. I suppose that as a college man I am thought to be interested only in those large and general ideas on which one can float without ever getting his feet on the ground, but I am not. I prefer to have my feet on the ground.

Now the journey we have to take cannot be taken unless we take it together. There is no use telling you who is doing this mischief unless you disapprove of it after you have heard of it, and I must say that there is no sport in telling you unless you disapprove of it after you have heard it. I have gone through a campaign in which I have endeavored to speak of things, and not of persons, but you speak of persons by implication when you speak of things and the plainer you make the implication, the more effective you make the moral. The only way to keep out of trouble, therefore, in the years to come is to see that your names are connected with the right things.

I say that not as a threat to this company, because,

of course, there is nobody here who has the least nervousness about the future, but I say it in order to convey more or less playfully—*more-or-less-playfully*—this intimation, that men have now got to stand up and be counted. Men have got to stand up now and be counted, and put their names down on this side or on that, and I believe that there is going to come presently, just so soon as men see that this is business and not amusement, that there is going to come enthusiasm for right things, which will result in this amazing and delightful discovery, that honor and integrity and public purpose breed more prosperity than any other things in the world.

God knows that the poor suffer enough in this country already, and a man would hesitate to take a single step that would increase the number of the poor, or the burdens of the poor, but we must move for the emancipation of the poor, and that emancipation will come from our own emancipation from the errors of our minds as to what constitutes prosperity.

Prosperity does not exist for a nation unless it be pervasive. Prosperity is not a thing which can be consumed privately or by a small number of persons, and the amount of wealth in a nation is very much less important than the accessibility of wealth in a nation. The more people you make it accessible to the more energy you call forth, until presently, if you carry the process far enough, you get almost the zest of a creative act. A nation seems to rise under your wand, and rise up

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and produce things greater than the minds of men have yet conceived. That comes from a universal hope, and it comes from nothing else. It comes because men know that they are free, and so long as with bowed heads and doubting hearts they are wondering if they ever shall be free, the marvel is not wrought. The marvel is the marvel of the confident mind and the light heart and the eye that sees the vision not so distant but what it may be hoped for and attained.

Now America has seen visions and has attained unto the realization of visions, and then for a little while she has slidden back and lost herself in a mist, and fought for things not worth fighting for and created antagonisms that need not have existed, and misunderstandings which were due to ignorance. She is lifting her head again and saying men are brothers after all and until they be brothers they cannot accomplish the great work of civilization.

The task ahead of me, so far as it is a task of appointment to office, is wholly hateful, but the task ahead of me, so far as it is the leadership of the United States in thinking out its own affairs, is full of nothing but what is bright and touched with confidence, because I KNOW that you have only to appeal to the people of the United States on the right grounds to put those who resist out of business, always provided they think you mean what you say. A single evidence that you do not is dangerous. More than one is almost fatal.

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It is not the matter of whether you are always right or not. It is not the question of whether you always succeed or not. It is a question of whether you always are moving in the same direction or not, and are always showing the same courage or not.

I am not a brave man, because I do not know anything to be afraid of. You may beat a man temporarily in politics, but if he is right he can go down smiling in your face, and saying, "It is not necessary that I should live to wreak my revenge upon you. That revenge will come in proportion as I have spoken the truth, for you never can silence that truth after it is spoken, and I can smile better than you can if any slightest portion of that kind of immortality is vouchsafed me."

If it can be remembered that you said something that freed the thought of the nation, then you can afford to die to-morrow, because your happiness and your power are safe. That is the kind of moralizing that comes into my mind when I think of the things to come. People make all sorts of sinister predictions as to the trouble we are going to get into down at Washington. I do not think they need give themselves any concern about that because it is going to be public trouble and the great jury is always going to know what the evidence in the case is.

I was warned the other day by the newspapers that I had committed an indiscretion in saying I was going to keep an absolutely open door in the executive offices

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at Washington, because there were so many people who would want to come in at the door. Perhaps I had better say for my own protection that I meant it would be open only to those who had business to transact, because I want to say to you before I sit down, that I may make myself very unpopular in the months to come by insisting upon preferring business to etiquette. When I take the oath of office I shall deem myself bound to transact the business of the nation, so far as it falls to the Executive, and I shall feel bound to cut out everything that does not touch that business. But that business has to be buttressed and supported and comprehended, and therefore I shall not be obliged to stay at Washington and not go about and converse with my neighbors, and the conversation perhaps will be more vital for me than it will be for my neighbors, for the object will be to learn what the neighbors are thinking about. It is a great deal more important to the country what you think than what I think.

You, as representing the great people of the United States, will do the effectual thinking, and my thinking will be effectual only in proportion as it really interprets the general thinking of the country at large. I must trouble you, therefore, to do a great deal of talking. I must trouble you to say what you really think, and the real difficulty about a community like that of New York is that so few men say in public what they really think. I know what a great many gentlemen here really think,

but they have said it to me privately, and many of them have requested me not to mention the fact that they said it. There is somebody in New York, and there are some things in New York that make them afraid. Well, if you are going to be afraid, we cannot help you down in Washington at all, but if you cannot say it any better, come and say it in private, provided you always say what you really think.

There is too much manners in politics. Good taste often stands in the way of public morals. It is not good taste to say what you really think of a man when it is not complimentary, but it is immensely serviceable, and the mere point and punctilio of manners ought not to restrain you. That is the reason so many politicians who are honest seem crude. They actually block out for you their real thoughts as they are, and unfavorable thoughts are not always artistic. They are not always beautiful, and they sometimes have to be framed in language for which the dictionary is quite insufficient.

You know in the trial of Judge Chase, so long ago that to refer to it is no aspersion upon the courts, one of the counts in the indictment against the judge was that he had been profane in charging jurors, which was manifestly at least an impropriety, but the only word affirmatively proved that he had used was the word "damn," and Mr. Luther Martin, who was counsel for Judge Chase, undertook to prove to the Senate of the United States that the word "damn" was a necessary

word of emphasis. If you were cataloging fools and spoke of fools, natural-born fools, and—where would you go next? In this presence, I would hesitate to say where to go next, but you know perfectly well where to go. And how would you classify that supreme category of folly otherwise than by the use of words, which, when we pronounce them, do not seem even to be correctly spelled?

A very curious thing has fallen under my observation since I left academic walks and got into political high roads, and that is the increased temptation to profanity.

I suppose it would be physically dangerous to bottle up in yourself without releasing some of the things that you are obliged to think, but of course you can avoid the release in public, and there are places and persons in the presence of whom it is appropriate and wholesome to release these natural and very human impulses of your spirit. I think that the recording angel probably does not listen, not only because it offends his taste, but because he knows that such things have to happen in order that the business of the world should go on, for there is such a thing as righteous anger, and without righteous anger I don't know how the conduct of the world can be pushed forward.

Those dilettante gentlemen who never get angry about anything never get enthusiastic about anything, and without enthusiasm there is no spirit in the world.

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I have been wandering in my talk to-night because I did not want to talk politics as "sich," and I, of course, would not consent to talk about myself except as perhaps hoping to be the spokesman of men like yourselves in some of the better impulses of the country; but all of my talk has circled about this thought: We ought to be discontented with any occasion of this kind which does not contribute to the general impulse. If men do not go away from an occasion like this, purposing to put more force into the best things in the nation then they have wasted the evening.

I want to appeal to you, gentlemen, to conceive of yourselves as trustees of those interests of the nation with which your personal interests have nothing to do. There are men sitting here who have done this, and from a worldly and material point of view, some of them have lost by it, but they will be mentioned after some of the rest of us are gone; and I suppose that it is better to have lost a fortune and gained an immortal thought than to have lost the thought and lived on the fortune, because you can exhaust the fortune, and you cannot exhaust the thought.

The world has too many people in it who devote themselves to expense regardless of pleasure. Indeed, most people who have a great deal of money seem to take it very hard, being obliged to think of ways to spend it, but no man ever felt jaded or blasé who spent



his time thinking how to expend his thoughts on great undertakings.

They say that business is going to be disturbed by the changes which are going to be undertaken by the Democratic party in the economic policy of the country. Business cannot be disturbed unless the minds of those who conduct it are disturbed. A panic is described in all the books on political economy that are not thought out in the presence of actual fact as merely a state of mind, because obviously when a panic occurs there is just as much wealth in the country the day after the panic as the day before. Nothing in material circumstances has changed, but the whole state of mind of the financial community has changed. They dare not part with their money. They call in their loans. They are excited, and they do not always know exactly why. That is a natural panic, but you know there are unnatural panics, and sometimes panics are said to occur because certain gentlemen want to create the impression that the wrong thing is going to be done. I am so remote from these things and so innocent that I do not know whether this is true or not, but I have heard that it is, and I can conceive that it is perfectly possible that it should be so, for the machinery is in existence by which the thing can be deliberately done. I say the machinery is in existence; frankly, I do not believe there is any man living at the present moment who dares use that machinery for that purpose. If he does, I promise him,

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not for myself but for my countrymen, a gibbet as high as Haman—not a literal gibbet, because that is not painful after it has been used, but a figurative gibbet, upon which the soul quivers so long as there are persons belonging to the family who can feel ashamed.

These are the punishments which cut to the quick, and America with her eyes open is not going to let any man do this thing.

But I speak as if I expected it. I do not. I speak as if I feared it. I do not. I do not fear anything that won't be more dangerous to the man who attempts it than to the men upon whom it is attempted.

Mr. Thomas made that capital quotation from Emerson about the impudence and the terror. Well, all the terror nowadays seems to me like Greek fire; there is nothing in it; it has all been invented; it is stage property.

The cure for that sort of thing is to have an audience who knows it is all make-believe, that no lives are involved, that nobody is going to be seriously hurt, that the slain are going to revive just as soon as the curtain goes down, and if you applaud enough their extravagant performance they will come out before the curtain and thank you.

I am very happy to believe that the future of America is assured. The recent election did not mean anything, if it did not mean that. America did not say that there was a particular man who was better than anybody

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else for that particular office. If it did it was a mistake. But it did say that there were certain things that it was not going to stand for, and that inasmuch as one party had given them a chance to support a man who also thought that these things ought not to be stood for, they were going to vote for him. That is what the recent election meant.

I shall be, of all men, most honored if I in any degree speak that common impulse; and there are men upon whom my eye falls, as I look around this company, who are going to tell me how to do it, who are going to stand at my side and tell me of these things and explain to me the things that I do not understand, and then enable me to serve the United States and try, through their wisdom, to interpret the general wisdom of the country itself.

I thank you, gentlemen, for this patient audience of a rambling discourse, and beg that after you go away you will not think of the imperfect way in which I expounded a great theme, but only of the theme itself.

THE TOASTMASTER: I deem it an honor in your behalf, to again express our thanks to these gentlemen who have given us this feast of reason.

The Toastmaster then announced that the President-elect would receive members of the Society and their guests in the Astor Gallery.